



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION

2001 Elmerton Avenue
Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797

Executive Office
717-705-6540

June 2, 2021

Mrs. Jamie Davidson
Forest Supervisor
Allegheny National Forest
4 Farm Colony Drive
Warren, PA 16365

Dear Mrs. Davidson:

The Game Commission appreciates and supports the Allegheny National Forest's ban on feeding wildlife.

Today, Pennsylvania's wildlife resources face a variety of threats related to both natural and human-caused factors. As the state agency responsible for managing Pennsylvania's wildlife, the Pennsylvania Game Commission is concerned about these threats.

We recognize feeding wildlife has been a tradition of many in our state. Although feeding wildlife may be grounded in good intentions, the negative consequences of feeding and the emergence of several new wildlife diseases indicate it is causing more harm than good.

The most concerning problem is disease transmission, primarily Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in deer and elk, and mange in bears – both of which were either absent or at much lower levels a decade ago. Both diseases are now an escalating issue in Pennsylvania and wildlife feeding is a risk factor for increasing transmission. Other diseases such as bovine tuberculosis, salmonellosis, toxoplasmosis, lungworms, and tapeworms can also be transmitted by feeding.

Although contagious and infectious diseases are a major concern, there are other negative consequences of feeding. Lactic acidosis or grain overload is a metabolic disease associated with feeding of deer and elk. Animal deaths due to lactic acidosis are documented annually in Pennsylvania.

In addition to the issues associated with increased disease transmission, feeding also blurs the lines between free-ranging versus private. Citizens who recreationally feed wildlife frequently assume a feeling of ownership over these animals. This violates the public trust doctrine that wildlife are a publicly owned resource.

Likewise, by feeding, wildlife learn to associate food with humans. This conditioning results in habituation where an animal becomes indifferent toward humans or human activity. The result can be increased vehicle strikes, property damage caused by wildlife in residential areas and other nuisance wildlife problems. Habituation also depreciates wildlife's natural independence from people, ultimately, "de-wilding" animals for human convenience.

Maintaining healthy wildlife populations is integral to the Game Commission's statutorily mandated mission. We need to protect our wildlife from the threats related to feeding, some of which have changed or increased in recent years.

For these reasons, the Pennsylvania Game Commission supports the Allegheny National Forest's ban on feeding wildlife.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bryan Burhans", written in a cursive style.

Bryan J. Burhans
Executive Director